

NOV 14 1963

Sec 6 D. Vietnam

Approved For Release 2000/08/27 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000300440010-3

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Harkins Reportedly Ignored Warning of Coup

SAIGON, Nov. 13 (UPI) — Reliable sources reported today that Gen. Paul D. Harkins, commander of U.S. Military Forces in South Viet-Nam, disregarded warnings by subordinates that the coup d'etat against the Ngo Dinh Diem government was being planned for Nov. 1.

The U.S. Military Assistance Command in Saigon formally denied the report and in Washington U.S. officials said there was no substance to it.

The sources said Harkins not only ignored the warnings but sent a paragraph in a joint military-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report to Washington saying that he did not believe a coup was imminent.

When the coup began on Nov. 1, the sources said, Harkins asked to have the para-

graph deleted from the report.

A statement issued today by the Military Assistance Command (MAC) said no such paragraph was included in the report.

"The revolutionary military committee (which staged the coup) advised Military Assistance Command headquarters of the coup at 1:45 p.m. on Nov. 1, which was approximately the time of their initial attack," the statement said.

"At the time, they regretted not having been able to take the Military Assistance Command headquarters into their confidence, but considered absolute secrecy paramount to the success of their plan."

The statement added that MAC had been informed of

troop movements on the morning of the coup, but "the cover planning had been so well conceived and executed that the imminence of a coup d'etat was not apparent."

"It follows, of course, that there was no request from MAC headquarters for the deletion of a paragraph (in the report to Washington) since no such joint message was sent," the statement said.

The sources said Harkins was not taken into the confidence of the coup leaders because they considered him too closely connected to the Diem government.

They said U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was kept up with coup plans and told two days before the revolt when it would occur.

Vietnamese sources said that several days before the coup Harkins mentioned in a conversation with Maj. Gen. Tran Van Don that he had heard rumors about a coup plot. They said Harkins asked Don why anyone would want to stage a coup against Viet-Nam since the government was winning the war against the Communist Viet Cong guerrillas. They said Harkins told Don that Don could take shelter in Harkins' house if there ever was a coup.

Don was one of the three generals who planned the coup.

Spurces in the new Vietnamese government said junta leaders have made it clear to the U.S. Embassy that they privately regard Harkins as a symbol of the old U.S. policy of support for the Diem regime, although they have made no specific desires known to the embassy concerning Harkins' future in Viet-Nam.

As head of the Military Assistance Command, Harkins has charge of the 15,000 U.S.

troop advisers to the Vietnamese army in the war against the Communist guerrillas.